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✓ Latest release

Potential workers

Potential labour supply of people who are not working, including wanting to work, availability for work, job attachment and job search.

Reference period February 2025

Released 29/07/2025

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Key statistics

In February 2025:

- 1.7 million people were not working but wanted to work (potential workers)
- 1.1 million people were available to start work, including 600,000 unemployed people

This Potential workers release uses data sourced from the annual Participation, Job Search and Mobility (PJSM) survey. More information from the survey is published in these topic-based releases:

- [Job mobility \(/statistics/labour/jobs/job-mobility/feb-2025\)](/statistics/labour/jobs/job-mobility/feb-2025)
- [Underemployed workers \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/underemployed-workers/feb-2025\)](/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/underemployed-workers/feb-2025)

Microdata from the PJSM survey for 2015 to 2025 will be released in [TableBuilder \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder) and [DataLab \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab) (as a supplementary file to the [Longitudinal Labour Force \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/longitudinal-labour-force-australia\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/longitudinal-labour-force-australia)) on 7 August 2025. For more information, refer to [Microdata and TableBuilder: Participation, Job Search and Mobility \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/participation-job-search-and-mobility-australia).

People who want to work

In February 2025, there were 22.0 million people in the usually resident civilian population who were aged 15 years or over, of whom:

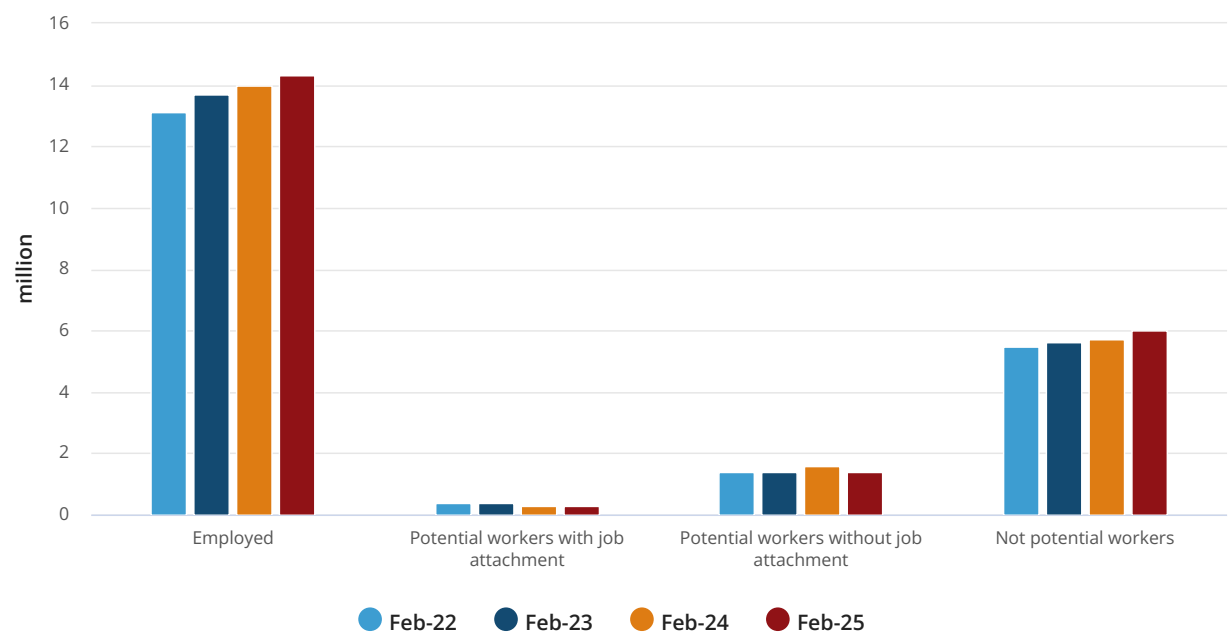
- 14.3 million were employed
- 1.7 million were not working but wanted to work (potential workers)
- 6.0 million did not want to work or were permanently not able to work (not potential workers).

Of the 1.7 million potential workers:

- 300,000 were attached to a job that they were about to start or were away from a job that they could return to
- 1.4 million were without a job.

Between February 2024 and February 2025, the number of potential workers without job attachment decreased from 1.6 million to 1.4 million. Over the same period, employment rose from 14.0 to 14.3 million.

Chart 1: Employment and potential workers

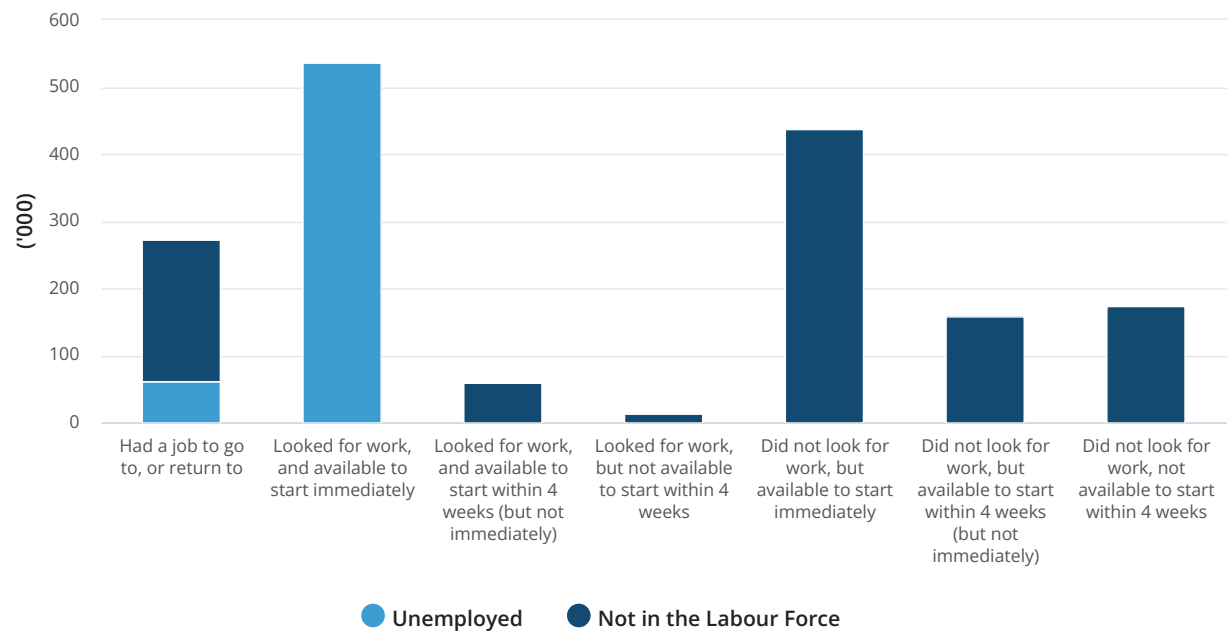


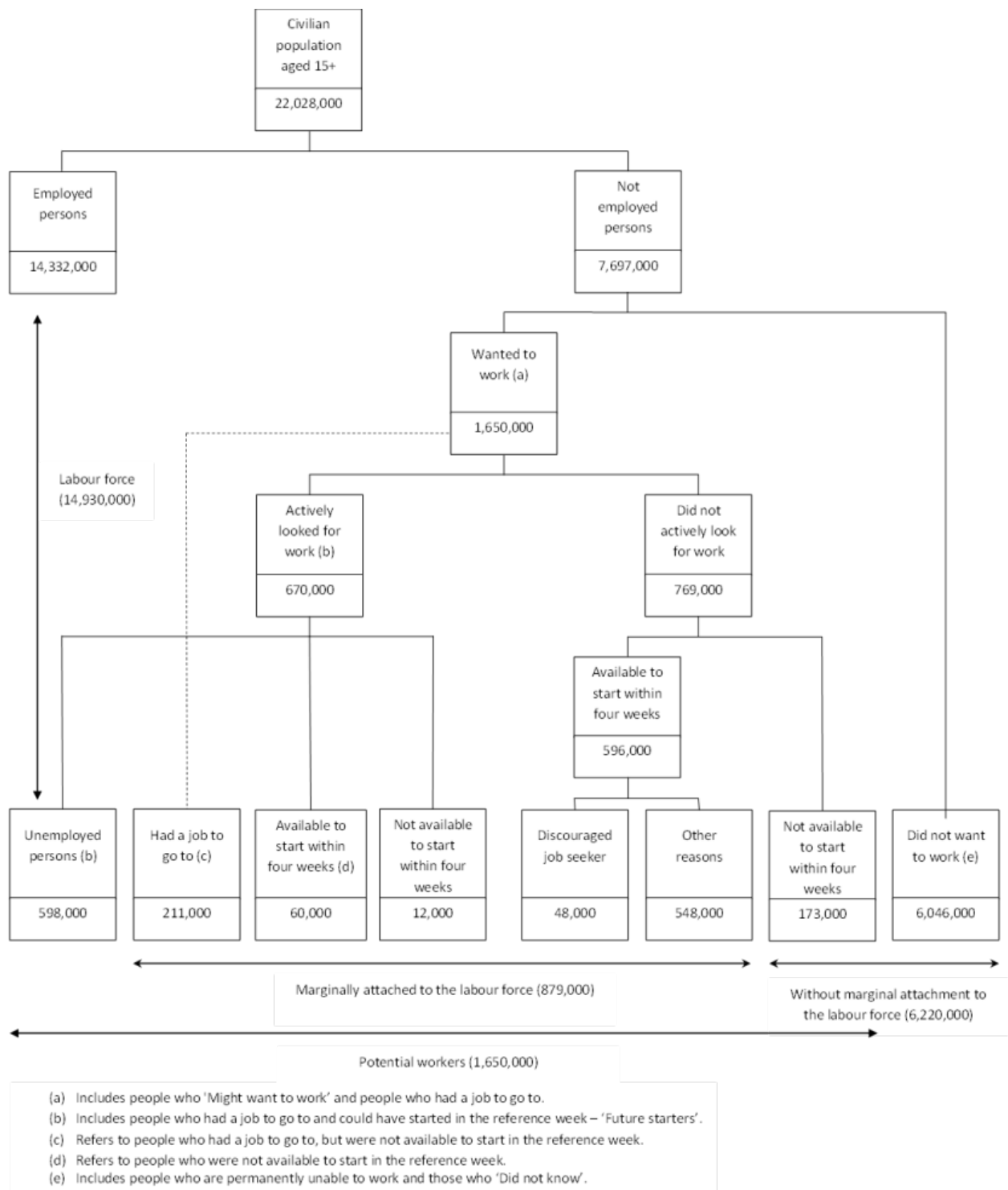
Of the 1.7 million potential workers:

- 608,800 looked for work
- 271,900 had a job to go to, or return to (potential workers with job attachment)
- 769,400 did not look for work.

Over three-quarters of those who wanted to work, but did not look for work, were available to start in the previous week or within the next four weeks.

Chart 2: People who wanted to work





Measures of potential workers

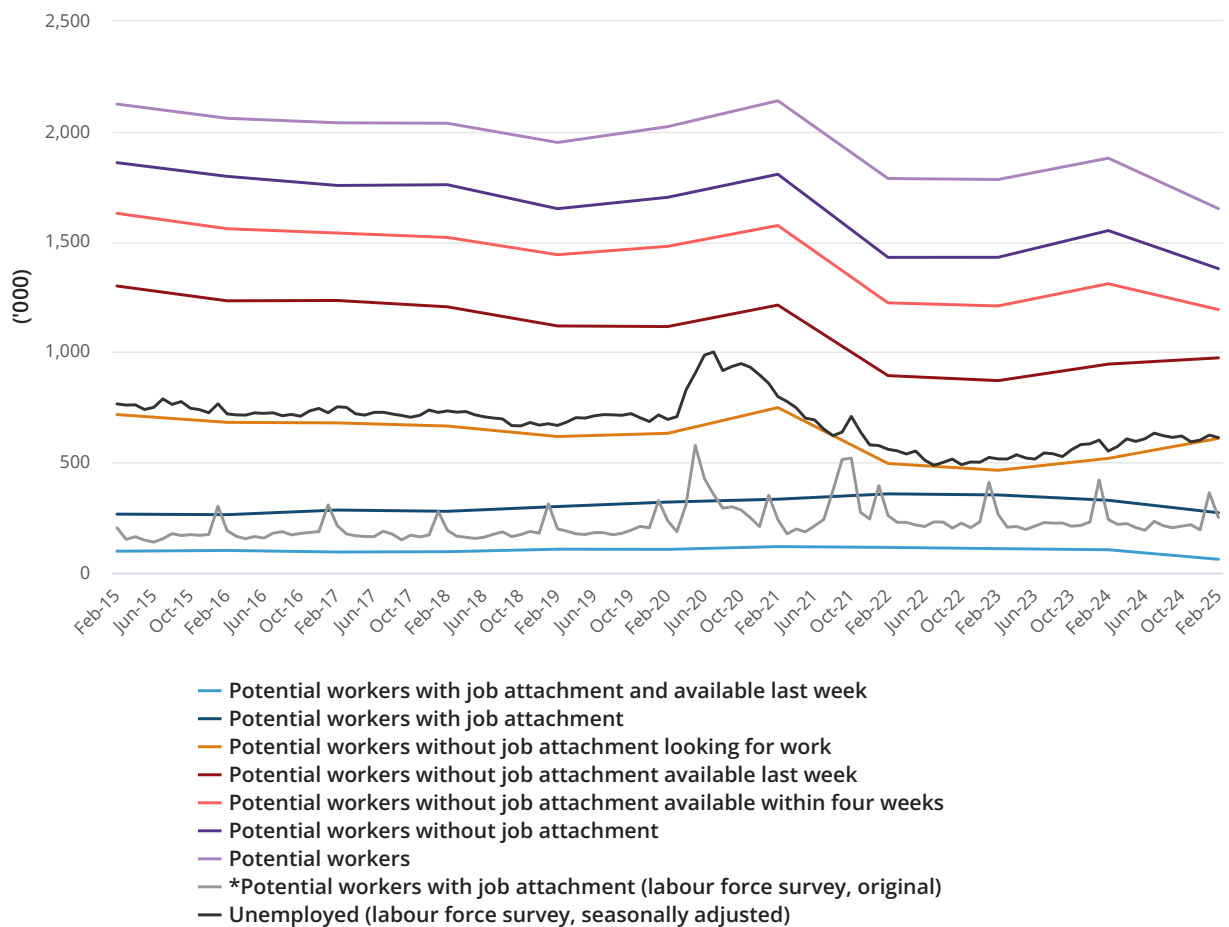
The number of unemployed people is an important measure for monitoring the labour market. Unemployment is necessarily strictly defined to reflect an economic measure of the immediately active and available labour supply, at a specific point in time.

However, there are additional ways to look at the potential workforce - either as potential workers now or potential workers in the short to medium-term. Note that in this context, the potential workforce reflects people within the usually resident population in Australia in February 2025, and does not account for potential workers from other

countries (including former or future residents of Australia, who may work in the Australian labour market in the future).

In February 2025, there were 1.7 million people who were potential workers. This was 10% of the 16.0 million people in the 'potential labour force' (i.e. those who were either employed or were potential workers). Of these, 597,600 were classified as unemployed.

Chart 3: Potential workers



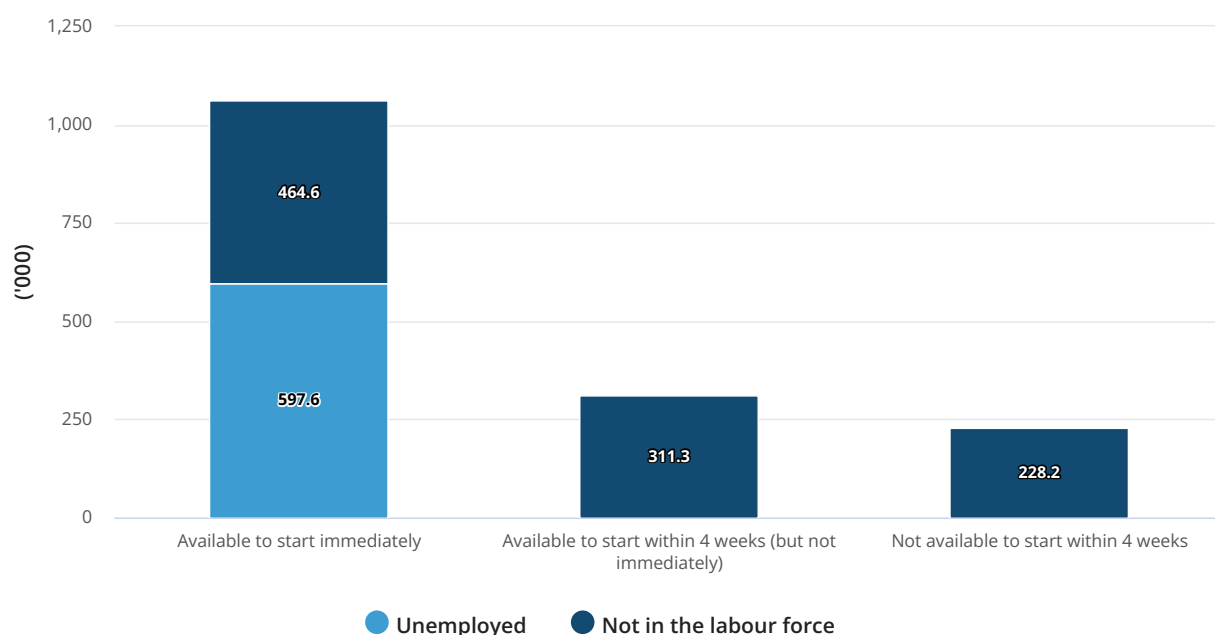
*Note: the monthly series of Potential workers with job attachment from the labour force survey provided above (grey line) is not as comprehensively measured as the annual surveys of PJS, which asks additional questions to determine a greater extent of job attachment. Although it is not as complete, the monthly series does provide some additional context to the unusual movements that happened in the months between the annual surveys that would otherwise be hidden.

Availability for work

Not all potential workers are available to start work immediately. Of the 1.7 million people in February 2025 who wanted to work:

- 1.1 million were available to start work in the previous week.
- 311,300 were available to start work within four weeks (but not last week).
- 228,200 were not available to start work within four weeks.

Chart 4: People who wanted to work and availability for work



The main reasons people who wanted to work were not available to start within four weeks were:

- Caring for children – 44,800 (20%)
- Studying, or returning to studies – 48,000 (21%)
- Own long-term health condition or disability – 42,900 (19%)
- Caring for ill or elderly person/relative – 22,100 (10%).
- Own short-term health condition or injury – 20,500 (9%).

Not looking for work

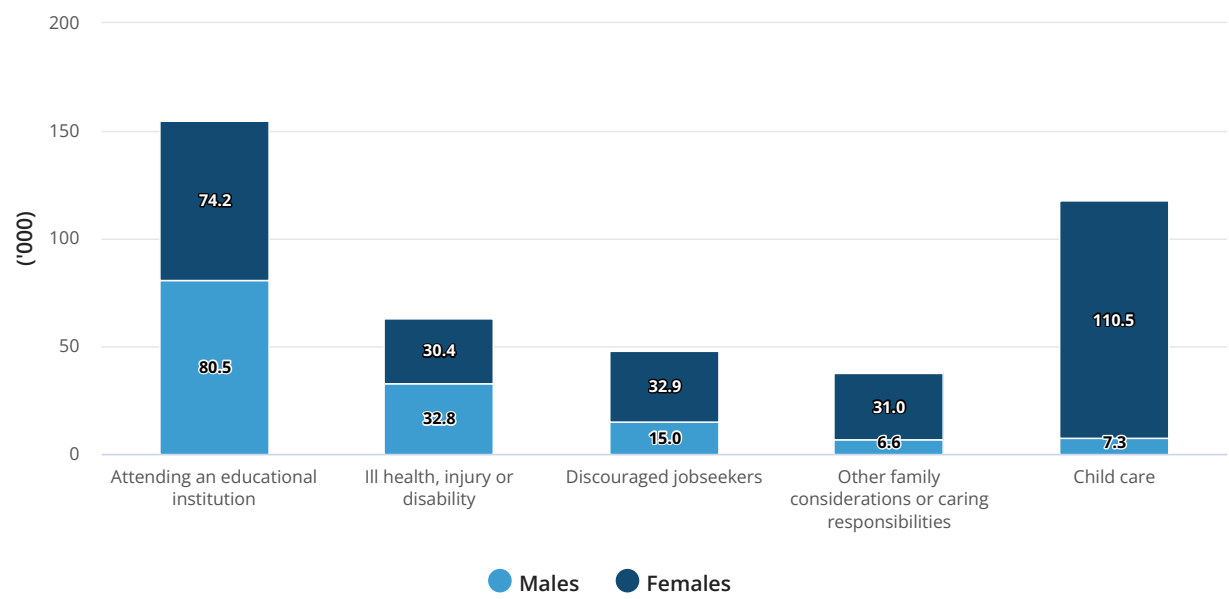
People who were unavailable for work in the short to medium-term may not begin looking for work until it is closer to the time when they will be able to work. Of those who were not available within four weeks:

- 48,600 looked for work in the last 12 months
- 228,100 did not look for work in the last 12 months.

There were 596,100 people who wanted to work, were available to start either immediately or within four weeks, but did not actively look for work. The main reasons they did not actively look for work last week were:

- Attending an educational institution – 154,700
- Childcare – 117,800
- Had no need or want to work – 52,900.

Chart 5: Main reason people who were available to start work within four weeks were not looking for work



People who don't want to work

In February 2025, there were 6.0 million people aged 15 years or over who did not want to work, or were permanently unable to work. The main activities of people who did not want to work were:

- Retired – 3.2 million (61%)
- Attending an educational institution – 597,100 (11%)
- Home duties – 507,100 (10%)
- Own long-term health condition or disability – 322,200 (6%).

There were 719,300 people who were permanently unable to work.

Data downloads

Potential workers

[Download all \(11.73 MB\)](#)

Table 1. Potential workers and discouraged job seekers

[↓ Download XLSX](#)
[672.93 KB]

Table 2. Characteristics of discouraged job seekers and other potential workers

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[5.33 MB]

Table 3. Duration since last job and main activity of discouraged job seekers and other potential workers

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Table 4. Reasons did not actively look for work

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Job search experience

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Table 5. Job search experience of unemployed persons

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Table 6. Characteristics of successful and unsuccessful job search experience

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Table 7. Looking for work

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Previous catalogue number

This release uses ABS catalogue number 6228.0.

Methodology

[Participation, Job Search and Mobility, Australia methodology, February 2025](#)